

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Fall 1999

Show Me the Money

Implementation Plan Outlines Funding Sources and Project Schedule

Possible funding strategies and a potential project schedule are highlights of a preliminary implementation plan for \$575 million in proposed LA1 highway improvements recently compiled by URS Grenier Woodward Clyde for the LA 1 Coalition.

"If we are to win in this battle for highway improvements, we knew we needed a detailed plan covering highway impacts, needs and a potential schedule of funding sources and construction work to take to state and federal decision-makers. This implementation plan sets specific funding and appropriation goals, and shows that we have done our homework when it comes to planning for our highway priorities," explains LA 1 Executive Director Roy Francis.

In order to identify the size and scope of potential local, state and federal funding sources, members of the LA 1 Coalition and local community leaders met with government officials and various financial experts over the past several months. A possible increase in revenue from outer continental shelf oil and gas production, now being debated in Congress, was also considered a

partial funding source for the proposed highway projects.

According to the implementation plan, a two-lane or four-lane alternative to LA1 from Port Fourchon to Golden Meadow, costing up to \$375 million, could be funded by a combination of TEA-21 High-Priority funds, appropriations from the Greater Lafourche Port

The report predicts an opening date in the summer of 2004 for the lower section of the new highway from Port Fourchon to Larose, and the summer of 2008 for the upper section.

Commission, OCS revenue and other dedicated funds. The implementation plan also calls for this lower section of a new highway to be developed as a toll road, and allowing toll revenues to finance normal operations and maintenance costs. Federal aid highway funds and state appropriations are targeted as potential funding for replacing the

Leeville Bridge, a \$45 million critical link in the highway corridor.

TEA-21 High-Priority funds and OCS revenue are also the strongest funding bets for improvements to the upper section of the highway, from Larose to relocated U.S. 90, expected to cost up to \$191 million.

But when will a new road be built? To thousands of workers and residents who travel LA1 daily, that question follows on the heels of any discussion of funding options. In the implementation plan, URS Grenier developed a construction timetable for both the lower and upper sections of the LA 1 project area. While environmental assessment and permitting, contract negotiations and finance issues may affect the ultimate construction schedule, the report predicts a roadway opening date in the summer of 2004 for the lower section of LA 1 from Port Fourchon to Larose. The summer of 2008 is presented as a possible completion date for road improvements to the upper section of the highway from Larose to Raceland at U.S. 90.



Road Improvements Urged in Final Report of LA 1 Task Force

For nearly a year, a 22-member panel appointed by Governor Mike Foster has been evaluating the condition of LA 1 from Grand Isle to Alexandria, and studying the need and feasibility of road improvements. This month, the group planned to issue its final report to the governor's office, a report that bodes well for potential highway upgrades from Grand Isle/Port Fourchon to U.S. 90.

The first of the group's recommendations calls for dividing the 240-mile length of highway from Grand Isle to Alexandria into four work sections, and prioritizing these sections from south to north. Considering such factors as proximity to the coast, alternative routes, accident rates, economic impacts and hurricane evacuation, task force members ranked the lowest portion of the highway, from Grand Isle/Port Fourchon to U.S. 90, as the one section generally in most need of immediate attention.

Also in the report, the Leeville bridge and a connector road between the Gramercy/Wallace Mississippi River

bridge and LA. Hwy. 3127 were identified by the task force as critical links in the safe, efficient movement of traffic along southern area of LA 1. Other road upgrades, including resurfacing and shoulder work, were suggested for the northern section of the road, all the way up to Alexandria.

After researching current funding allocations and meeting with finance experts, the task force also proposed various local, state and federal funding options for highway improvements based on existing and expected funding sources. A few of the recommended projects, such as a new Leeville Bridge and the Gramercy/Wallace connector road, have already been allocated partial funding from the federal TEA-21 bill and Louisiana's capital outlay budget. The governor's office and the state DOTD may choose to use the task force findings to support the purpose and need of future highway improvements to LA 1, as well as help obtain funding during state budget hearings and Congressional

budget debate.

"The Governor's concern about the fragile status of LA 1 from Grand Isle all the way up to Alexandria, and the highway condition's impact on hurricane evacuation, environmental protection and commerce was the reason he pulled this task force together. Hopefully, our work can be used as a blueprint for the highway upgrades we think are necessary if LA1 is to be a safe, vital artery through this important region of the state," said LA1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis, who serves as vice-chairman of the task force.

Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout and members Charlotte Bollinger, Billy Coyle and Roger White also serve on the panel. The group expects to continue their work for another year, specifically to monitor federal OCS legislation and the impacts that it may have on funding for highway improvements, as well as the next Louisiana legislative session.

Project Updates



• The La. Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) held a public hearing at the Larose Civic Center on August 19 to gather input from nearby residents on a feasibility study currently being conducted by URS Grenier. The study includes analysis of need, potential alignment, right-of-ways, cost and impacts for highway alternatives connecting the existing LA 3235 at the Intracoastal Waterway in Larose to relocated U.S. 90. It will serve as a supplement to the Hurricane Evacuation Corridor Study recently completed for area parishes. Federal money from the 1998 TEA-21 bill and a La. DOTD match are funding the project.

• Mike Baker Engineers have begun work on the Environmental Impact Statement covering LA 1 improvements from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon. The EIS has been put on a fast track thanks to private funding provided by the LA1 Coalition.

• DOTD conducted a public meeting August 31 at the Larose Civic Center to present engineering details on an area road and bridge improvement project. The proposed action includes the four-lane extension of LA657 to provide a connection between LA3235, now under construction, and existing LA 1. The proposal also calls for replacing the pontoon bridge on LA 310 north of West 15th Street with a four-lane vertical lift bridge that would connect the LA657 extension with the intracoastal waterway bridge.



Chairman's Report



-by Ted Falgout, Executive Director, Greater Lafourche Port Commission

One of the primary goals established by the LA 1 Coalition from its onset was to create an awareness of the significance of Port Fourchon and the importance of the substandard highway system leading to this port of national interest.

We have surpassed ever the greatest expectations in achieving this goal. I can't begin to list the countless articles published that have mentioned the significance of LA 1. In Washington, our group has become the "poster child" for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Title One Infrastructure Initiative. In Louisiana, we're mentioned whenever major highway needs are the topic, and locally, we listen closely to the issues being discussed by our elected officials and election candidates. The recent public hearings on current highway studies had record turnouts.

Our organization has put together excellent documentation of our needs and how we propose to implement them through numerous LA 1 Coalition publications and brochures. We have convinced the U.S. Minerals Management Service (MMS) to document the impact of OCS activities on our community and

infrastructure, and the results have supported our claims.

The most recent documentation by MMS is a study entitled, "Port Fourchon: Phenomenal Growth and Development Brings New Challenges to the Port and Local Community." This study, which

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has not been formally released yet, gives a brief history of the Port, tracks its phenomenal growth, identifies its dependence on oil and gas as well as significance to this nation's energy supply, and discusses the related impacts experienced by our infrastructure and community. A couple of surveys also conducted had some interesting results.

Two hundred people traveling through helicopter facilities at the port responded to the surveys. Only 11.5 percent of respondents lived in Lafourche Parish, with 46.5 percent living somewhere else in the state and 42 percent living out of the state. This fact alone

certainly substantiates our claim that the Port's impact is truly of state and national significance in terms of workforce levels.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents work in federal OCS waters offshore. When asked to rate the quality and safety of LA 1, the average rating given the road was a 2.5, based on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest possible rating and 1 being the worst.

It is quite evident that our claims are now being backed by studies that can help us tell our story. We have come a long way in a short time. With the Port and the Coalition, we may never have gotten this "jumpstart" necessary to make road improvements happen. As this documentation and other tools are provided to us, we will become even more effective. What was the doubt of many is getting closer and closer to reality. Now more than ever before, we must remember the cajun saying, "Lache' pas la patate."



The Window of Opportunity is Now

Congressional efforts to provide oil-producing states like Louisiana a greater share of revenue from OCS production off their coasts are still alive in Washington, but the LA1 Coalition and

other supporters are hoping for real Congressional action within the next few weeks.

"The current session of Congress will end before Thanksgiving, and legislators won't return until the new year, with new issues and new agendas to tackle. Now is really the do or die time for OCS legislation, and we're doing everything we can to get a package heard and passed to our satisfaction before the recess," remarked LA 1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis.

Existing OCS legislation include HR 701 (Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999) co-authored by Reps. Billy

Tauzin and Chris John, and S25 ("Fair Share" bill) co-authored by Sen. Mary Landrieu. Both packages would provide increased funding to Louisiana and other states for mitigation of environmental and infrastructure impacts of industry activity. Louisiana stands to gain up to \$347 million in additional OCS revenue per year.

To help in the OCS push, contact your senators and congressmen and let them know that Louisiana citizens are actively interested in the outcome of this legislation and consider it a high priority that should be passed before the holiday recess.

LA 1 COALITION CONTRIBUTORS

As of September 30, 1999

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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Previously scheduled for October 19,
has been postponed until further notice.
LA 1 Coalition members will
be notified of the new date.

For Your Information...

If you would like to receive additional copies of "One to One" or more information on the LA 1 Coalition, call Roy Francis, Executive Director, at (504) 448-4485 or write to us at P.O. Box 2048-NSU, Thibodaux, LA 70310. Our office is located on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA, within the offices of the South Louisiana Economic Council. The LA 1 Coalition is a non-profit 501-c4 corporation.